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Scoping
Meeting
(SDIP)

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WE'RE LOSING OUR DELTA

And with it, would go the drinking water for over 22 million people, 25% of the nation's supply of table foods and thousands of acres of prime agriculture land. (See U.S. Geological Survey Circular 1182.) This loss would be catastrophic for our great state of California. How could this happen? By a flooding of salt water from San Francisco bay and the ocean feeding it.

There are 3 main causes for this problem and they can not be separated from each other with out affecting each other.

1. Lack of fresh clean water.
   In years past, there were 7 major tributaries that flowed into the Delta, today there are only 2 of any real flow, the Sacramento and the American rivers and they are greatly abused.

2. Subsidence.
   The sinking heart of the state. (USGS-1182). For over 100 years the Delta and parts of the San Joaquin Valley have been sinking at the rate of 1 to 3 inches per year. Many islands in the Delta are 18 to 25 feet below sea level and the area in the valley around Mendota has sunk over 30 feet because of ground water overpumping. Drive from Stockton to Brentwood via Highway 4 and as you cross Old River and Middle River bridges, notice how far the water level is in relation

to the adjacent farm land; (over 20 feet). It should also be noted that the cities of San Jose and Santa Clara are 14 feet lower in elevation due to subsidence from over pumping of ground water in the Santa Clara valley and rely on Delta water to keep from sinking lower.

3. Silting.

As the Delta waters have been slowed on their way to the ocean, from over pumping and diversion, the silt that for centuries was carried out beyond the Golden Gate and over the continental shelf has been settling in the main channels from the upper Delta areas to the ocean entry of San Francisco bay. If you compare navigation charts over a 50 year span, you will see how the depth has drastically changed in many areas and requires a great deal more dredging than ever before.

ARE WE TO LATE ?

I hope not. However, if action isn't taken to reverse what has been happening, and quickly, the Delta and a lot more could be lost for ever. The following are suggestions.

1. Restart fresh water flows to at least 1/3rd of natural amounts averaged over 150 years of all tributaries that fed the Delta. Increase these flows over 40 or 50 years to their natural amount and never divert more than 1/3rd of this flow for transport to other areas. The San Joaquin river should be the first for this action because it is essential for the San Joaquin Valley areas and was turned into a sewer when its entire head water flow was sent south from the Friant Kern dam above Fresno. Next should come the following rivers, (in no special order) the Tuolumne - Stanislaus - Calaveras - Mokelumne - and Cosumnes.

2. After water flows are restarted, subsidence should be checked for levee restoration and repairs. Most of the levees are sitting on soil that has reached its shear capacity and adding more soilweight will just cause more sinking. Perhaps the Engineers can come up with a solution to gaining more height and strength before we have more failures of these aging levees as we've seen over the years.

In conclusion I would like to mention, in all the meetings I have attended, there doesn't seem to be a sense of urgency. Many things are under study by CALFED - Dept. of Water Resources - Delta Protection Commission, and others. All of these studies have merit and are good, and quite a few band-aids are being applied, but the problem of more water for the Delta should be number 1, and not how we can cut up what little is left.

I understand there is an ongoing seismic study of the Delta area and a blind fault under the Delta.

Let's take the worst case scenario and suppose many parts of the levee system were to rupture during an earthquake. At the present ground level and lack of incoming flow of fresh water the entire area would probably be flooded with salt water in a matter of hours and most if not all of our DELTA would be history. Lord willing this will never happen, but it could.

I strongly recommend anyone wishing to study more of these serious problems get a copy of U.S. Geological Survey Circular 1182, and read it.

Sincerely,

Harry

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As a post-script, I would like to point out that with the current population explosion we are undergoing and 105 gallons a day per person water usage normally required, our large coastal citys should look to desalinization as a water supply. (Hopefully with Govt. help).

Great strides have been made in both cost and methods of desalinization in the past few years and could possibly release more water for agriculture use.

There are many other things that could be added to the list of needs, such as completion of many more small retaining dams for flood control that were never built after the California aqueduct was started.

The three most important items remain, fresh water supply, subsidence control, and silting removal.

All else is important but secondary in saving what Mother nature only loaned us for a while.

Harry

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